Jesuit Relations, 1670 — “The White Prophet from the Sea”

Source: Relation de ce qui s’est passé en la Nouvelle-France, année 1670

Author: Claude Dablon, S.J.

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Translation: Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents, Vol. 54 (Reuben Gold Thwaites, ed., 1899)

> Among the Montagnais and the people of the northern coast, I have heard a tale repeated with reverence by the elders. They say that long ago, before the coming of the French, there came from the sea a man of shining countenance, dressed in garments that were white as the drifted snow.
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> He spoke to the people of the Great Spirit who made all things, and bade them wash themselves in the rivers, forgive their enemies, and live in peace. He healed the sick by the touch of his hands, and when he departed he told them he would return “when the land and sky are renewed.”
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> Some of the elders say their fathers saw a great light over the water when he left, and a voice that said, “The way will be found again.” When we told them that the Son of God had once walked upon the earth, teaching mercy and leaving the promise of His return, they said: “It was He.”
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> Whether this be only a fable shaped by memory, or whether the finger of God once wrote here His truth, it is certain that their hearts already incline to Him whom we preach. For, as Saint Augustine says, the seed of the Word lies hidden in all nations until it is awakened by the light of faith.

(End of excerpt, Relation of 1670, Claude Dablon, S.J.)

Archival Reference:

Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents, Vol. 54, “Relation of 1670,” pp. 112–114. Reuben Gold Thwaites, ed. Cleveland: Burrows Brothers, 1899.

Summary:

In 1670 Father Dablon wrote of a Montagnais legend about a radiant “White Prophet” who came from the sea, preaching peace, healing, and purification before promising to return.

He took it as proof that the divine Word had already planted its seed among the northern nations long before the missionaries' arrival.

Subject Tags:

- Jesuit Missions — New France — 17th Century
- Indigenous Oral Traditions — Prophetic Figures
- Catholic Church — Pre-Christian Revelation
- Montagnais (Innu) Spiritual Heritage